Non-procurement of paddy by FCI in Orissa

164. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the farmers of Orissa are being compelled to sell paddy at the rate of Rs. 250/- to Rs. 300/- only as FCI is not purchasing the paddy in Orissa;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether it is also a fact that Zonal Office of FCI at Kolkata is showing step motherly attitude towards Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) No, Sir. No such report has come to the notice of the Government.

(b) Normally, in Orissa, paddy is purchased by the Millers and part of the milled rice is handed over to Food Corporation of India under levy. FCI has collected 3.72 lakh tonnes of a levy rice in Orissa upto 18.2.2001, as compared to 3.52 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period last year.

(c) No Sir.

UNO approval for wheat for oil trade agreement

165. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any steps have been taken to seek approval of the United Nations Organisation Sanctions Committee for implementing the wheat-for-oil trade agreement finalised recently between India and Iraq; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and its present status?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, an understanding has been reached in

principle about the possibility of a Counter Trade Arrangement which would enable Iraq to effect import of certain food items (especially wheat) against export of crude oil and oil products.

Hindi Salahakar Samiti in Ministry of External Affairs

166. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) when was the Hindi Salahakar Samiti reconstituted in the Ministry of External Affairs;

(b) the number of sittings of the Samiti held during the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) the efforts made to conduct meetings regularly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) The process of re-constitution of the Hindi Salahakar Samiti of the Ministry of External Affairs is in the final stages. As soon as this is constituted, efforts would be made to hold its meetings regularly.

Improvement in Indo-U.S. relations

167. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any step has been taken by the Government to improve Indo-U.S. relations after the new President took the oath of office in that country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the strategies proposed to be adopted to improve and expand bilateral relations with the United States of America?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government has maintained regular interaction with members of the Bush Administration, both during the U.S.